

THE REAL DEAL ABOUT VEAL!

There are many common myths about veal, such as the belief that veal comes from a very young calf. In fact, veal is one of the oldest of all food animals when it goes to market! Veal is also a meat steeped in history and tradition going right back to biblical times. But today, only 2% of Canadians are farmers—this means there are very few of us who actually know the real deal about veal. So here it is!



VEAL VOCAB

Here are a few terms you need to know to get around a veal farm:

Calf:	a young cow, weighs about 100 lbs at birth
Heifer:	a young female cow, before she gives birth to any calves
Bull:	a male cow
Bob calf:	a male calf that will be raised as veal
Hutch:	a small house where calves live for the first few weeks
Weaning:	switching a calf's food from milk to solid feed
Grain-fed veal:	veal calves that eat grain once they are no longer fed milk
Milk-fed veal:	veal calves that are only fed milk
Veal farmer:	a person who raises veal calves

So what exactly is veal anyway?

When a dairy cow gives birth to a calf, she starts to produce milk. Calves can be either male or female. Female calves grow up to have calves of their own and produce milk. Bull calves don't produce milk, so they are raised for meat instead.

Calves of many colours.

Calves come in different styles or breeds. Just like dogs, for example, some are black, and some are brown or red; some are bigger, and others are smaller. Most veal farms specialize in one breed of calf. The most popular breed is Holstein – more than 95% of all veal calves in Ontario are Holsteins.

Holstein cows are known for their ability to produce a lot of milk, making them the most popular dairy breed in Canada today. Holsteins are also the largest of all dairy animals and their distinctive black and white markings are widely used to depict all cows. Calves grow quickly, are well-muscled and very lean. Other breeds include Brown Swiss, Jersey, Guernsey and Ayrshire.

A LOOK BEHIND THE BARN DOOR TELLS YOU EVERYTHING YOU
EVER WANTED TO KNOW ABOUT HOW VEAL IS PRODUCED...
AND MORE!

MILK VS. GRAIN



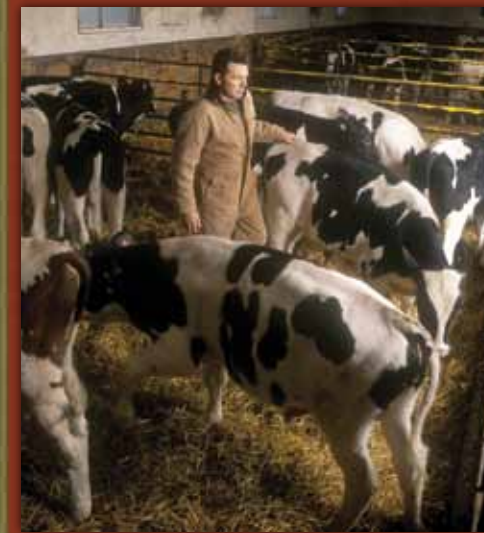
Grain-fed veal calves eating corn mixed with vitamins and minerals.



Calves can drink water whenever they want from special water bowls.



A milk-fed veal calf.



Farmers watch animals closely to make sure they have enough feed and water, and don't become sick.



Calves live in well ventilated barns with group pens.

Some calves will stay on a milk diet and others will be weaned off milk and switched to a grain diet once they are about eight weeks old. Calves that stay on a milk diet are called "milk-fed" veal. The other calves are called "grain-fed" veal and will eat corn mixed with vitamins and minerals. A 600 lb veal calf will eat 15 lbs of grain and drink up to 30 litres of water a day. That's the same as 14 boxes of cereal and 15 two litre cartons of milk!

Milk-fed veal calves are raised in barns in individual stalls or in group pens together with other calves. Barns are well lit during the day and dark at night, and are built to keep calves cool in summer and warm in the winter. They also have slatted floors — manure and urine falls through this type of floor to keep calves clean and dry. Farmers watch the animals carefully so that if any become sick, they can take care of them right away.

Grain-fed calves are raised first in hutches or individual stalls and then groups. At six to eight weeks of age, they are moved into barns where they live in group pens together with other calves of the same size. This is to keep bigger calves from bullying smaller ones, and make sure they all have equal access to feed. Farmers make sure the animals have plenty of feed and water, and clean bedding of straw or wood shavings.



In the beginning...

Cows can be bred by natural mating with bulls or by artificial insemination. Artificial insemination allows farmers to breed animals for specific characteristics. Almost all dairy cows in Canada are bred using artificial insemination.

A cow is pregnant for about nine months — just like humans — before giving birth to her calf. Once calves are born, they are moved into their own pens so that farmers can care for them properly. This means feeding them colostrum, which is the first milk their mothers produce. It is full of nutrients that help them build a healthy immune system. Calves are born weighing about 100 lbs, and are pretty active almost immediately. This includes walking, eating, and exploring the world around them.

Bull calves are sold by the dairy farmer to specialized veal farmers who will raise them. Calves can go directly from one farm to another, or to a sales barn where farmers buy them at an auction.

Calves come onto a veal farm from many different farms, so farmers have to protect them from getting sick. This includes giving them vaccinations against different diseases. Many calves also live in individual covered outdoor pens called hutches for the first six weeks to protect them from being exposed to any illnesses the other calves might have. They are fed milk replacer, which is milk powder mixed with water, that contains a balanced diet of proteins, fat, carbohydrates, minerals and vitamins.



A young calf is walking and eating within minutes of being born!



Individual hutches allow calves to grow and develop their immune systems before living with other calves.

KEEPING CALVES HEALTHY AND STRONG

Farmers work hard to raise strong and healthy calves. The Ontario Veal Quality Assurance Program and the Canadian government's Code of Practice for the Care and Handling of Farm Animals — Veal both help farmers ensure they are following proper techniques and standards for feeding, housing and handling calves, as well as treating sick animals. Veal farmers also work with veterinarians to help keep their calves healthy, just as pet owners take their pets to the vet to make sure they are in good health. Vets will prescribe medications for calves when they're sick, but also regularly visit farms to monitor the health of the animals.



Veal farmers work closely with veterinarians to help keep their calves healthy.



A grain-fed veal calf at a market-ready weight of 700 lbs.



Trucks are specifically designed just for cattle.

Going to market

Milk-fed calves are ready to go to market when they weigh 450 lbs, which is at approximately five months of age. Grain-fed calves reach their market weight of 700 lbs at around seven months of age. These are the animals that supply us with milk-fed and grain-fed veal at the store. Milk-fed veal is light pink in colour, very tender with a subtle taste. Grain-fed veal, by comparison, is a bit darker pink, also very tender but with a mild beef flavour.

Veal calves are transported to meat processing plants on special trucks designed for cattle. There are government guidelines for transporting veal calves that farmers, truckers and individuals working at processing plants must follow. This includes how to handle them properly, and how many animals can be put on a truck to make sure they are comfortable and calm.

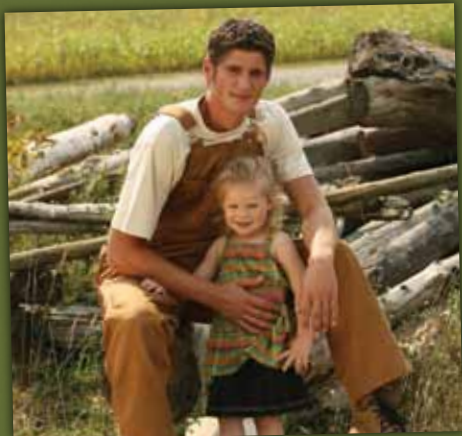
Processing plants follow strict government rules on humane handling and processing animals and meat products. Each animal is inspected by a government inspector at the plant. This is to ensure that only healthy animals enter the food chain and that meat is safe to eat.

ALL IN A DAY'S WORK

Veal calves need the same things that all animals do, such as a balanced diet, clean water, a health program and the right kind of environment.

Farmers work hard to give them all these necessities seven days a week, 365 days a year. And they are constantly working with researchers, veterinarians and nutritionists to make calf diets, housing and health even better.

There are about 450 veal farmers in Ontario who raise approximately 90,000 veal calves a year. Most of these farms are owned by family farmers who also raise other commodities such as beef, poultry or crops. An average-sized veal farm will raise about 175 - 200 calves per year.



VEAL FARMERS ARE
PROUD OF WHAT THEY DO!



FOR MORE INFORMATION

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